

against public servants, journalists, members of the military, and average citizens. He destroyed lives in the process. But he never revealed his list of 57 names or any other credible evidence for his claims. Nonetheless, Senator Joe McCarthy discredited and defamed anyone standing in his way. He would accuse his opponents of being Communists or Communist sympathizers if they publicly disagreed with him.

With rare and notable exceptions—and one of them Senator Margaret Chase Smith, Republican Senator of Maine, and a few others—no one had the courage to question Joe McCarthy or challenge his wild allegations. Politicians were too afraid that he would turn on them next, so they remained quiet.

And in the absence of opposition, he assumed even greater power—until 1954, when some courageous members of Senator McCarthy's own political party, the Republican Party, joined together with the Democrats in the Senate. They voted to condemn Senator McCarthy and the lies that had fueled his witch hunt. They stood in a bipartisan majority to do it. With that vote, Senator Joseph McCarthy's reign of terror was brought to an end. The press began to ignore him, and the public had had their fill.

What will it take for our Republican colleagues today to say that they are done with the Big Lie of Trumpism? What will it take for them to reject it and renounce the normalization of political violence? What will it take for Republicans to admit that January 6 was a deadly insurrection, not a "legitimate political discourse"?

Americans of conscience of both political parties and Independents as well need to unite in support of the truth. That doesn't mean we are going to agree on every issue. On the contrary, real debate is the lifeblood of our democracy. But we have to work from a shared set of facts and reality—like the fact that President Biden actually won the 2020 election and there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud.

I want to commend my Republican colleagues who have been willing to speak the truth in the last few days. I know it can't be easy.

Over the weekend, Senator MITT ROMNEY, Senator BILL CASSIDY, and Senator LISA MURKOWSKI spoke out against the Republican National Committee's decision to censure Congresswoman LIZ CHENEY and Congressman ADAM KINZINGER of Illinois for committing the unforgivable sin of investigating the violent assault against American democracy. Unfortunately, they are a small but courageous minority. The vast majority of my Republican colleagues remain silent while their party leaders declare January 6 legitimate.

And on Friday, former Vice President Pence publicly stated: "President Trump is wrong . . . Under the Constitution, I had no right to change the outcome of our election."

That simple, declarative statement of truth—that the Vice President cannot singlehandedly overrule the will of the American people—is welcomed, but the fact that it drew outrage from former President Trump and his supporters is a sad reflection on the reality of today's Republican Party.

If the events leading up to January 6 taught us anything, it is that aspiring authoritarians like Donald Trump will toss aside longstanding laws and values to cling to power. That is why for the past several months, a bipartisan group of Senators have been discussing a proposal to modernize the Electoral Count Act, an obscure law that was at the heart of former President Trump's efforts to overturn the election. I have been working on this effort on our side with Senators KING and KLOBUCHAR, and there is a bipartisan effort, on the same matter, taking place as well.

By updating the Electoral Count Act, we can make clear that the Vice President does not have the power to reject a State's lawfully appointed electors and overturn the results of an election. That is important, and I believe it is a promising sign that Democrats and Republicans are going to join together in discussion of finally rewriting this ancient law.

But I also want to be honest about the scope of threats facing our American democracy. At a moment when too many Republican Party leaders are legitimizing the January 6 insurrection and Republican State legislators are erecting new barriers to the ballot box, particularly for African Americans, we must have the courage to restore the Voting Rights Act. And we need to come together across party lines to defend our democracy, condemn violence, and to live by the rule of law, not the rule of the mob.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PADILLA). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

INFLATION

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I don't need to tell anyone—except perhaps the Democratic Party here in Congress—that our country has a major inflation problem. The first year of the Biden administration has been characterized by a huge increase in inflation. Inflation is currently at a 40-year high. Let me just repeat that. Inflation is currently at a 40-year high. The last time inflation was this bad, "E.T." was just premiering in movie theaters and "Return of the Jedi" hadn't even come out yet.

Inflation is so bad that despite wage increases in 2021, Americans saw a de facto pay cut. A December survey by the New York Times found that just 17 percent of Americans said their wages had kept up with inflation.

The White House Chief of Staff may think inflation is "a high-class problem," but for the mom at the grocery store wondering if she can afford to buy ground beef this week or for the young worker just starting out who is wondering if she can afford to fill up her car, inflation is a very real problem.

Americans are struggling. They are facing huge price increases at the grocery store; huge price increases at the gas pump; big increases in the cost of household goods, like furniture and bedding and laundry equipment; massive increases in the cost of fuel oil and gas service; higher electric bills; and on and on.

Inflation is weighing down businesses, too, from larger businesses to family farms and ranches. A recent survey from the National Federation of Independent Business found that 22 percent of small businesses consider inflation to be the biggest challenge facing their business, a 20-point increase from the beginning of 2021—a 20-point increase.

It is no wonder that 69 percent of Americans disapprove of the President's handling of inflation and 56 percent disapprove of his handling of the economy.

Inflation is a major burden for American families and businesses—a fact that seems utterly lost on members of the Democratic Party. While American families struggle, Democrats' focus is on anything but inflation.

What is worse, many Democrats are still hoping to pass elements of their reckless tax-and-spending spree, the so-called Build Back Better plan, despite the fact that it was a bloated Democrat spending spree that helped get us into this inflation mess in the first place. Yes, while the pandemic created inflationary pressures, a big reason we are in our current inflation mess is because of Democrats' decision to push through an unnecessary and partisan \$2 trillion spending bill last March.

When Democrats took office last January, inflation was well within an acceptable range, what is known as the target inflation rate. It might have stayed there had Democrats not decided that they needed to pass a massive government spending spree under the guise of COVID relief and, I might add, mere weeks after Congress had already passed a major COVID bill. That is right. December 2020 saw Congress pass its fifth bipartisan COVID relief bill, and that one was a nearly \$1 trillion piece of legislation that met essentially all current pressing COVID needs. But the ink was barely dry on the page before Democrats decided that they needed to take advantage of the COVID situation to pass yet another bill—this time, a hyperpartisan \$1.9 trillion piece of legislation packed with unnecessary government spending and payoffs to Democrat interest groups.

Again, there were five bipartisan COVID bills, the last of which passed in December of 2020. It was a \$1 trillion

bill that took care of all the outstanding COVID needs. Yet, within weeks, Democrats here in Congress were proposing another \$2 trillion, most of which had little to do with COVID or the pandemic and a lot more to do with their partisan agenda.

But the point is, the definition of “inflation” is “too many dollars chasing too few goods and services.” That is exactly the situation the Democrats helped create with their so-called American Rescue Plan. They sent too many Federal dollars into the economy, and the economy overheated as a result. Now we are sitting here with the worst inflation in 40 years, and instead of trying to address our inflation crisis, Democrats still—still—want to double down on the strategy that helped get us into this mess in the first place. “Reckless and irresponsible spending” is putting it mildly.

In January, Senator TIM SCOTT and I introduced the Inflation Prevention Act, a bill to stop Congress from considering any legislation that contains new spending and is estimated to increase inflation if the year-over-year inflation rate exceeds 4½ percent. One would hope that legislation like this wouldn't be necessary at a time when inflation far exceeds the target inflation rate, but, as we have seen with Democrats' reckless tax-and-spending spree, that isn't the case.

So Senator TIM SCOTT and I, along with several of our Republican colleagues, have introduced this bill, which would help prevent reckless spending legislation, like the Democrats' so-called Build Back Better Act, when inflation is high.

Again, let me just point out that on top of a \$2 trillion spending bill a year ago in March—less than a year ago in March—the Democrats' prescription now is another \$5 trillion in spending, financed in part with tax increases, which also fuels inflation, and about \$3 trillion in debt on top of the \$30 trillion in debt we already have.

So we have rampant pandemic inflation, attributable largely to the massive spending bill passed on a partisan basis last March. Now, instead of tackling inflation and putting policies in place that would help drive inflation down, the solution Democrats are proposing is a \$5 trillion spending bill.

Americans are struggling. Everywhere they turn, they are facing higher prices, stretching their budgets to the limit. If Democrats really want to help American families, they should abandon the reckless tax-and-spending spree once and for all and focus on mitigating damage they have already done with their inflationary spending.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator MORAN and I be able to complete our remarks prior to the scheduled votes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF RETA JO LEWIS

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting American manufacturing and support the nomination of Reta Jo Lewis to be President of the Export-Import Bank. As President of Ex-Im and chair of the Bank's Board of Directors, Ms. Lewis will lead our Nation's official export credit Agency as it supports U.S. workers and manufacturers, especially in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and throughout our country. Ex-Im's job is to support American businesses in the face of competition—so often, unfair competition from countries like China.

Ms. Lewis is the leader we need in the fight to help U.S. manufacturers compete globally. She has 25 years of distinguished leadership experience in international affairs, law, and public policy. She is a historic nominee as the first Black woman to lead Ex-Im.

She serves as a senior fellow and director of congressional affairs at the German Marshall Fund, where she leads bipartisan efforts to strengthen transatlantic cooperation. Before joining the German Marshall Fund, Ms. Lewis served in the Obama administration as the State Department's first-ever Special Representative for Global Intergovernmental Affairs.

She will put American workers and exporters first. That has been the hallmark of this administration—putting workers at the center of our government; putting workers at the center of our economic policy.

Ms. Lewis understands that Ex-Im is vital to these manufacturing jobs and our Nation's economic competitiveness.

There are some 100 export credit agencies and credit programs around the world that support foreign manufacturers. China's export finance activity is larger—China's is larger—than all the export credit provided by the G7 countries combined. That alone is reason to move forward on Ex-Im. We know that the Chinese Government used export credit as a weapon to win manufacturing business in critical sectors and to undermine American companies and American workers. We must be in a better position to compete.

We have had so much good job news in Ohio over the last few weeks. It is not a coincidence that for the first time in my lifetime, we have a President who leads by talking about workers, who leads by talking about unions. As a result of his leadership, we are seeing more job creation in Ohio. We have seen more jobs created in 2021 than in any number of years in the past. We are seeing now tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs—Intel, Hyperion, GE Aviation—coming to my State. It is all made possible because we are putting workers at the center of our economy.

Look at the results we are getting. Last year—this is worth saying like five times—last year, for the first time in 20 years, our economy actually grew faster than China's. Our GDP grew

faster than China's GDP. Again, that is because we have a President of the United States who puts workers at the center of our economic policy, who understands that carrying a union card means better wages, better benefits, and more control over your work schedule.

But we know that China and our other competitors aren't giving up. They are constantly finding new ways to cheat, new ways to undermine American jobs. That is why we need every tool possible to compete, including a fully functioning Export-Import Bank with an experienced, tenacious leader at the helm. Jobs in Ohio and jobs around the country depend on Ms. Lewis's success.

I urge my colleagues—as we voted overwhelmingly on cloture—I urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Reta Jo Lewis for the Ex-Im Bank.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of John P. Howard III, of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the District of Columbia Court of Appeals for the term of fifteen years.

Mr. BROWN. I ask unanimous consent that the scheduled vote occur immediately.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE ON HOWARD NOMINATION

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Howard nomination?

Mr. BROWN. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from California (Mrs. FEINSTEIN) and the Senator from New Mexico (Mr. LUJÁN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO) and the Senator from South Dakota (Mr. ROUNDS).

The result was announced—yeas 62, nays 34, as follows: